

Travers Block  
166-184 Bellevue Avenue  
Newport  
Newport County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-330

HABS  
RI,  
3-NEWP,  
38-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-330

## TRAVERS BLOCK

HABS  
RI,  
3-NEWP,  
38-

Location: 166-184 Bellevue Avenue.

Present Owner: K. and L. Real Estate, Inc.

Present Occupants: 166-168: Bellevue Shoes; 170: Round-Up Steak House; 172-174: Derring-Do; 176: The Cheese Shop; 178: Mae Connell's; 180: O'Hanley's; 182: David R. Rough; 184: Michel's Beauty Salon.

Present Use: Rented commercial space.

Statement of  
Significance:

The Travers Block was built in 1870-1871 for William R. Travers and was designed by Richard Morris Hunt. It is significant as one of four buildings that comprise a distinguished commercial street, the east side of Bellevue Avenue beginning with this building and running south. The next building, and the next in date, is the Newport Casino. The largest of the four, and historically the best known, it was not only a commercial building but a social center for the summer colony as well. Built in 1880-1881, it is a well known example of the "Shingle Style" work of the architects McKim, Mead, and White. The third building in the group is the King Block, designed by the Boston architects Perkins and Betton, and built in 1892-1893. The Audrain Building, built 1902-1903, Bruce Price, architect, is the southern anchor of the group. The four buildings maintain a long street line and are basically related in scale and massing. They are also related in their use of broken silhouettes and richly textured surfaces, which at the same time allow great variety and liveliness. Without matching, the buildings compliment each other in a particularly urbane way and form an ensemble which should be preserved.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 29, Lot 51. The following

is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the city of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

1869 Deed of May 5, 1869, recorded in LE8. 40, pp. 383-84.

From: James S. Watson  
To: William R. Travers  
For: \$13,050

"... a parcel of land... bounded Westerly on Bellevue Avenue one hundred seventy four feet, Northerly on Bath Road one hundred feet, Easterly on land of this grantor one hundred seventy four feet, and Southerly on the land of said grantor one hundred feet... together with all improvements..."

1906 Deed of February 27, 1906, recorded in LE8. 87, pp. 212-15.

From: Devisees of William R. Travers  
To: Travers Land Co.  
For: \$42,000

1947 Deed of October 29, 1947, recorded in LEB. 166, pp. 54-5.

From: Travers Land Co.  
To: Vart Kazanjian

1955 Deed of December 30, 1955, recorded in LEB. 189, pp. 159-60.

From: Vart Kazanjian  
To: Norman H. Kazanjian, Powell H. Kazanjian and John H. Kazanjian, Jr.

1966 Deed of September 1, 1966, recorded in LE8. 218, pp. 16-7.

From: Louise T. Kazanjian  
To: K. and L. Real Estate, Inc.

2. Date of erection: 1870-1871

3. Architect: Richard Morris Hunt

4. Builder: Cranston and Burdick of Newport

5. Original plans: Survey drawing of floor plans, 1886.  
Newport Historical Society.
  6. Alterations and additions: The interiors on the ground floor have undergone numerous alterations to accommodate the various shops and businesses renting space in the building. This has resulted in some obvious, but fortunately superficial alterations to the exterior of the building. There have been no additions.
  7. Important old views: None known
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:
- C. Sources of Information:
1. Primary and unpublished sources:  
Records of Deeds in the Newport City Hall.  
Howland, Catherine Clinton, The Richard Morris Hunt Papers, edited by Alan Burnham, unpublished manuscript in the American Architectural Archive.
  2. Secondary and published sources:  
Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, second edition, 1967, p. 150, plate 181.  
Schuyler, Montgomery, "The Works of the Late Richard M. Hunt", Architectural Record, V (October-December, 1895), 97-180.  
Boston Transcript, May 8, 1871, "Letter from Newport".  
Newport Mercury, November 12, 1870, p. 2.
  3. Likely sources not yet investigated:  
Office records of Richard Morris Hunt.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Travers Block, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, was an important addition to the early commercial building of Bellevue Avenue. With its strongly articulated half-timbered architecture, it is similar to Hunt's domestic work of this period in Newport. It is an interesting and well-preserved example of his early style.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior of the structure is in

good condition. The second and third floors, presently not in use, have been altered.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 174 feet by 64 feet; rectangular plan; 10 bays; 2-1/2 stories.
2. Foundations: Foundations are of granite in a random pattern.
3. Wall construction: The red common brick walls have an applied half-timbered pattern composed of heavy champhered members.
4. Structural system: The interior has oak framing on sixteen inch centers.
5. Chimneys: There are five low brick chimneys on the east side of the structure.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways: Each shop south of the entrance has a two-leaf door with two lights per leaf set above a molded rectangular panel. Each shop to the north of the entrance has one large wood door with a light set above two rectangular panels.
  - b. Windows: Each shop has a large plate glass window to the side of the entrance. The upper floor windows are double hung with two-light sashes.
7. Roof: The hipped Mansard roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The champhered eave brackets spring from the decorative wood "stringcourse" to the edge of the flared roof. The eight gables have a variety of cut and sawn decoration. The two-long shed dormers on the west facade roof each have seven windows. All gables and dormers repeat the window articulation of the second story.
8. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: The floor level of the shops is two or three steps above the sidewalk. The recessed central entrance doors provide access to the second floor.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The first floor is divided into ten shops,

each 16 feet by 60 feet, and a central entrance hall. There were forty bachelor apartments on the second and third floors. The central stair hall is intersected by a north-south double-loaded corridor.

2. Stairways: The U-shaped open well stairway at the rear of the center of the building extends from the basement to the third floor. The stairway is decorated with heavy block newels, turned balusters, and heavy molded railings. A straight run stairway at the front center of the building connects the ground floor with the second floor stair hall. At either end of the north-south double-loaded corridor on the second floor is located a U-shaped, open well stairway leading to the third floor. These stairways have heavy turned newels, turned balusters, and continuous heavy molded railings.
3. Flooring: The floors are oak throughout the building.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plaster. In the central hallways, there are traces of brick red paint.
5. Doorways and doors: The four-panel wood doors are set in heavy molded doorways. Some doorways on the second and third floor are painted brick red with a black bead molding.
6. Special decorative features: None of note
7. Hardware: None of note
8. Lighting: An early two-wire lighting system of the late 19th century with exposed wires carried on porcelain insulators still remains on the second and third floors.
9. Heating: There is no central heating plant.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is placed up to the wide sidewalk at a busy commercial intersection.
2. Historic landscape design: None
3. Outbuildings: None
4. Walks: None

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project -- 1971. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, Thomas M. Slade, (University of Notre Dame), Project Supervisor, Cervin Robinson, photographer.